

Mayor's Column for the July 13, 2011 Review

The 2010 city audit is complete. Johnson Block reported results at the Finance Committee meeting on July 7. General fund operations ended in the black, with revenues exceeding expenses. The results provided an increase in the general fund balance for the city. The fund balance is about 36% of the general fund budget—the auditor indicated that this is a healthy cushion, with most Wisconsin municipalities' general fund balances in the 15-20% range. General obligation debt is at 49% of debt capacity, maintaining the appropriately conservative city goal of keeping debt under 50% of capacity. We are in strong financial shape as we begin to absorb the local impacts of the new State budget.

Our preliminary 2012 budget work is already underway. The 2012 budget calendar has been distributed to department heads and committees. Several city committees will begin building 2012 budget requests at their July meetings. A Committee of the Whole meeting is scheduled for July 25—specific budget items will not be on the agenda, but strategic thinking/policy as it relates to lean government operations is a likely topic of discussion.

On Monday of this week, the Evansville Grove Society hosted a meeting of the Capital Region of the Wisconsin Council for Local History. There are more than 380 local history societies in Wisconsin. Evansville has two, the Evansville Grove Society and the Theodore Robinson Society. 40 representatives from societies in Monticello, New Glarus, Albany, Fitchburg, Shorewood, Blooming Grove, Footville, Milton, Oregon, Waunakee, Madison, and Evansville met at Creekside Place from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Following a mayoral welcome, there was a business meeting of the Capital Region of the Council. Rick Bernstein, field services representative of the Wisconsin Historical Society, presented a program entitled "Quality Exhibits on a Tight Budget." Bernstein's topic was timely because many of the local societies have museums that are operating on a shoestring. Grove Society President John Decker spoke on local Civil War research and commemorations. Details of the recent Rally 'Round the Flag weekend of events in Evansville were shared. The afternoon concluded with a tour of the local history museum (Baker Office Building), viewing of satellite exhibits at the Eager Economy Building, and walking tours of the historic district.

The long-planned East Main Street bridge replacement over Allen Creek is scheduled to begin on July 25, with completion expected in early October. My desk file on the bridge includes design work from 2008, but the new bridge was originally discussed as part of the even earlier Main Street reconstruction project. The deteriorated bridge is currently weight-restricted.

The bridge replacement is a Wisconsin Department of Transportation project and the state will fund about 80% of the construction cost with the remainder locally funded. The new bridge will be an aesthetic improvement for Main Street and the design includes a narrower bridge deck as a traffic calming feature.

The project calls for the bridge to be completely out during replacement. There will be no state-designated detour because the bridge is part of a local street, not a state or county highway. There are two local detours around the bridge construction:

- Travelling east on East Main Street from the four corners, turn south on Maple Street (Night Owl corner) to Water Street; turn left on Water Street to Union Street; turn left on Union Street back to Main Street.
- Travelling west on East Main Street into downtown, turn right on Union Street (Citgo corner) to North Madison Street intersection (Mercy Clinic); turn hard left onto North Madison Street heading back to Main Street.

500 maps indicating detours around the upcoming construction were distributed during the Fourth of July parade. An additional 500 maps will be stuffed into Piggly Wiggly grocery bags prior to commencement of the project. The suggested detours can be found on the city website at www.ci.evansville.wi.gov. Please keep in mind that the construction will be ongoing during the first several weeks of the school year. Downtown businesses will remain open during the construction—please help your local shopkeepers by patronizing their businesses throughout the project.

Community Announcements

Curbside yard waste pick up is this week, July 11 to 15, because of last week's holiday hours.

Eager Free Public Library is sponsoring "Food for Fines" through July 31. Bring in non-perishable food items for the Care Closet Food Pantry and reduce/pay your library fine. (One non-perishable food item equals \$1 of fines.)

Evansville Community Theatre presents six performances of "Fiddler on the Roof" over the next two weekends. Tickets are available in advance at Evansville Pharmacy, Bank of Evansville, Kopecky's Piggly Wiggly, and www.ectstagelights.org. Show times are on July 15, 16, 22, and 23 at 7:00 p.m. or July 17 and 23 at 2 p.m.

Gayle Lange Puhl will present "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes: A Study in Parallels and Contrasts" on Tuesday, July 19, at 10:30 a.m. Everyone is welcome at the A.M. Club meeting at the Eager Free Public Library. Refreshments will be served.

Community Thanks

Hundreds of volunteers need to be thanked for the wonderful events in Evansville the past couple of weeks. I cannot name everyone that needs thanks, but I know that thousands of volunteer hours have been provided to make the activities happen and be successful.

The “buzz” about the fireworks on July 1 and 4 continues. Kyle Allen and his assistants outdid themselves. Thank you Kyle, and also to those that helped you—as well as to the many businesses and individuals that opened their wallets to enable the fantastic firework displays.

Tom Calley, Jim Brooks, and their legions of helpers put on a great weekend of festivities. The music was terrific, the parade was enjoyable, and hometown flavor was found everywhere.

The ice cream social on the library lawn, with the home-made cakes of our many fabulous local bakers and the wonderful auction items donated by our citizens, is always the perfect beginning to our holiday activities. The winner of the Evansville Discover Wisconsin prize package, Diane Czaplewski of West Bend, was in Evansville part of the weekend. She was at the ice cream social and was a winning bidder on the food items supplied by Tipi Produce.

The grand opening of Creekside Place added a special air of celebration to the holiday. More than 400 pancake breakfasts were served during the event. Breakfast sponsors, Vogel Construction, R. M. Berg, and Larson Acres, teamed with the Music Boosters to provide a tasty community meal. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was complete with our dear friend Mary Peckham hoisting the ceremonial scissors (with a little help) to symbolize project success.

The Evansville Youth Center volunteers and the many citizens that patronized the Center-sponsored Ducky Derby, dunk tank, food booth, and bounce houses, have provided valuable dollars that will enhance youth programming this coming school year. Food booths for the Boy Scouts, FFA, and youth wrestling will provide additional dollars for their programs.

I could go on for paragraphs about events and activities that were successful because of the volunteer efforts of committed citizens. Opportunities for community togetherness are the foundation for building a close-knit, caring community. I thank all of you for your part in making our community celebrations enjoyable and memorable.